

## **WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report**

### **August 2005**

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Division News
  - Public Transportation
  - Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
  - Sound Transit/WSDOT Projects
  - Passenger Rail
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Grant Announcement from WSDOT's Highways and Local Programs
  - Upcoming Events
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#### **Division News**

##### **WSDOT Rail Office Changes**

Changes are being made at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to better focus its resources on freight needs and services across Washington State. Freight rail activities currently carried out by the Rail Office will be moved to the Freight Policy and Strategy Office. This change will result in a better-coordinated freight program. WSDOT's goal is to fully understand the various freight supply chains across the state and to develop strategies to address needs and recommend investment choices to the Governor and the legislature.

In addition to the two offices working together to conduct studies, develop projects, and solve problems related to joint use of the rail infrastructure, they will do the following:

The Freight Policy and Strategy Office will manage and administer the:

- WSDOT Grain Train program
- Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad operations
- Development of the produce railcar pool program
- Grants and loans for freight rail infrastructure projects
- Development strategies and policies for future mainline and shortline freight rail activities

The Rail Office will continue to:

- Deliver the Amtrak Cascades passenger rail program (including operating and capital projects)
- Provide engineering and environmental support services to the Freight Policy and Strategy Office for delivery of freight capital projects

WSDOT has begun implementing these changes and will work out details over the next few months.

##### **OTM Advisory Groups Begin Their Work**

Two advisory bodies supporting the department's new Office of Transit Mobility (OTM) held their first meetings in July.

The Advisory Committee met on July 14 to discuss its role in making recommendations for the development of the new transit mobility program. Judy Giniger, WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Director, in her welcome to the advisory committee reminded members that their role was one of action and that the success of the new program is dependent upon everyone pulling together to move the program forward.

The committee divided into two groups to discuss different topics and then the groups reported back to the entire committee. One group discussed the development of performance goals and measuring and communicating performance for the program. The second group discussed key principles that the grant technical work group should use to guide their development of interim grant criteria for the 2005 Regional Mobility Grant Program and the prioritization process recommendations. The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for August 5.

The grant technical work group met on July 19. Members discussed their role in providing technical support in the development of the Regional Mobility Grant Program. The work group reviewed the preliminary guidance from the Advisory Committee and discussed potential grant criteria and how projects should be submitted and prioritized. The next Grant Technical Work Group meeting is scheduled for August 9.

Committee meetings are open to the public and meeting reports will be available on WSDOT's Web site at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/otm/default.cfm>

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## Public Transportation

### WSDOT and Peninsula Transportation Providers to Host Open Houses

WSDOT and Peninsula area public transportation providers will host two open houses in Jefferson and Clallam counties to provide information about travel options following the loss of Pennco Transportation's door-to-door service.

The open houses will be held on Tuesday, August 2, 2005, in the following locations:

- Sequim Transit Center, North 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and West Cedar St., Sequim, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Jefferson County Library, 620 Cedar Avenue, Port Hadlock, 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Representatives from Clallam Transit, Jefferson Transit, Olympic Bus Lines, Budget Rent-a-Car, Goodwin Aviation, Kenmore Air, Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle, and Paratransit Services will be on-hand to provide trip-planning assistance and answer transportation questions. Service information from Bellair Airporter will also be available.

WSDOT public transportation staff will provide information about projects to coordinate intercity services and to provide on-line route and schedule information. For more information about the open houses, the public can contact WSDOT's Public Transportation and Commute Options Office at [transit@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:transit@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7911.

### Yakima Transit Expands Transit Center Services and Vanpool Program



On July 14, Yakima Transit held an event to celebrate expanded services at the downtown transit center and an expanded vanpool program.

Bus riders now have the convenience of purchasing tickets and bus passes and getting personalized travel information at the transit center. People with disabilities staff the customer service office at the transit center through this unique project funded in part with a WSDOT ParaTransit/Special Needs grant.

The vanpool program was expanded with the receipt of ten new vans funded with a grant from WSDOT's vanpool program. The vans provide low-cost, reliable transportation, enabling riders who live in Yakima to travel to their jobs outside the city.

### **The 2005–07 Public Transportation Grant Program Has Begun**

WSDOT's public transportation grants program hit the ground running in July. Most contracts have been signed and many projects have begun. During June and July, WSDOT's grants team provided grant management training to transportation providers. The training was mandatory for all organizations receiving competitive grant funds for the 2005–07 biennium and was offered in Olympia, SeaTac, Spokane, and Yakima. Attendees included 82 representatives of 58 grantee organizations.

### **Public Transportation Safety and Security**

During a crisis situation, many rural transportation providers look to WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail Division for guidance on how to respond to potential threats and to get official information coming from Homeland Security. To better develop the Safety and Security program, WSDOT will survey rural transportation systems and intercity bus carriers to find out their safety and security needs. Some needs already identified include enhanced communications systems, surveillance, and fencing. WSDOT is developing training and other strategies to help meet those needs. Barb Savary is WSDOT's contact for safety and security issues. To set up an appointment or ask questions, please contact Barb at [savaryb@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:savaryb@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7929.

### **WSDOT To Contract For Over 50 Minibuses**

WSDOT hosted an all-day pre-bid meeting to discuss vehicle specifications for a group purchase of minibuses for the 2005–2007 grant program. Four vendors and 15 representatives from organizations receiving grant funds attended the meeting. Participants developed a bid document with specifications that are practical and easy to read and created a list of options tailored to meet the needs of individual grant recipients.



WSDOT anticipates awarding a contract for approximately fifty 12- to 18-passenger wheelchair-accessible minibuses with an option to purchase up to another 20 vehicles. (This is up from 37 minibuses ordered during the 2003–05 grant program). The request for bids will be issued in early August, vendor bids will be due in mid-September, and the successful bidder will deliver vehicles starting in early February 2006.

Public transportation grant recipients may purchase vehicles on their own, but many organizations join WSDOT's Consolidated Vehicle Procurement Program to:

- Save money—up to \$10,000 per vehicle
- Save time and administrative efforts
- Ensure compliance with federal and state regulations

For the 2005–07 biennium, WSDOT has awarded capital grant funds to purchase a total of 111 vehicles. For assistance with vehicle purchases, please contact Hiep Tran, WSDOT's public transportation procurement specialist, at [tranh@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:tranh@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7875.

### **Public Transportation Conference is August 22–24 in SeaTac**

WSDOT's 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Transportation Conference is just three weeks away! The preliminary conference program outlining the schedule of events and describing over 50 workshops was mailed last month. WSDOT staff is now finalizing conference details and workshop panelists and speakers are organizing their presentations. The Expo is sold out with 49 information booths filling two Grand Ballrooms. Don't miss this year's exciting event in SeaTac. Register today at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference).

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## Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

### New Intercity Bus Service for Walla Walla Area



A Walla Walla Intercity Bus Project meeting was held at Valley Transit in July to plan a new "GrapeLine" bus service that Genie Tours expects to start operating in September. The "GrapeLine" will connect Walla Walla to the Tri-Cities, with planned stops in Pasco, Burbank, Wallula, and Touchet. The new intercity service, funded

through WSDOT's public transportation grant program, also connects passengers to Greyhound, Amtrak, Ben Franklin Transit, and Valley Transit.

The meeting brought Genie Tours together with members of the Blue Mountain Coordinated Transportation Coalition and prospective purchasers of intercity services.

Daniel Wayne, WSDOT's Intercity Specialist, and Dan Carter, Genie Tours owner, also participated in the Northwest Motorcoach Association Meeting on July 20 in Lynnwood. Dan Carter provided an overview of the new service and encouraged other private carriers to participate in WSDOT's grant program.

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## Sound Transit/WSDOT Projects

### Access Downtown Project Earns Engineering Award

The Bellevue Direct Access project, the cornerstone of Access Downtown, was recently selected as a winner in the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Seattle Section's 2005 Local Outstanding Civil Engineering Awards Program. The Bellevue Direct Access project received an Outstanding Award for Excellence in Transportation Engineering. The purpose of these awards is to recognize selected projects designed by members of ASCE.

Access Downtown is a \$139 million package of projects designed to improve access to and from I-405 in Bellevue. The projects included a new interchange at Northeast Sixth Street for buses and carpools, known as the Direct Access project, giving buses direct access to an expanded Bellevue Transit Center. It also improved freeway interchanges at Northeast Fourth, Northeast Eighth, and Southeast Eighth streets. The package was a partnership between Sound Transit, WSDOT, the City of Bellevue, King County Metro, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Transportation Improvement Board. The public agency partnership delivered the Eastside's single largest transportation improvement project on December 16, 2004, a year ahead of schedule and \$25 million under the baseline budget.

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## Rail

### Amtrak Increases Security Advisory Level

Last month, Amtrak increased the railroad's security advisory level in response to the terrorist bombings in London's transit system. Amtrak reports that security was increased at stations, aboard trains and along the railroad. The heightened security involved deployment of more Amtrak police officers and K-9 teams as well as briefings to the railroad's employees reminding them to continue being vigilant.



Amtrak took the extra security measures strictly as a precaution. There was no specific or credible threat made against Amtrak. The railroad continues at this heightened security level until further notice. Passengers are reminded to contact Amtrak police or to call 911 if they see any suspicious activity.



### **Rail Office Makes Presentation on Development of Rail in Washington**

Jeff Schultz, Rail Operations and Technical Expert, recently gave a presentation to the National Railway Historical Society's national convention in Portland. He spoke about passenger and freight rail, joined by speakers from the Oregon Department of Transportation who added information about railroads in their state.

Jeff spoke about the past, present, and future of rail in Washington. He noted WSDOT's completed rail projects from the 2003-2005 biennium and outlined projects included in the 2005 Transportation Partnership Project Program.



Over 850 people from across the nation and six countries came to the conference, according to Arlen L. Sheldrake, Convention Chair. "We have lots of attractions here in the Pacific Northwest," said Sheldrake, "and one of the most unique is Amtrak *Cascades*."

### **Kevin Jeffers Departs the Rail Office**

After 16 years with WSDOT, Rail Projects Engineer Kevin Jeffers left the department on July 22 to become the general manager for a propane production and distribution facility based in Rochester, Washington.

Kevin began his WSDOT career as a bridge designer in 1989. After spending eight years in the bridge design and bridge preservation offices and obtaining a professional engineer license, Kevin became Rail Projects Engineer in the Rail Office in 1997. Kevin made important contributions to the development of Amtrak *Cascades* and shortline rail infrastructure.



WSDOT's Rail Office will be recruiting to fill Kevin's position as quickly as possible.

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## **Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management**

### **CTR Task Force Approves Preliminary Redesign Recommendations**

At its July 22 meeting, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force approved several preliminary legislative recommendations for the CTR program:

1. Continue the CTR program and evaluate potential changes.
2. Use morning congestion as the indicator for where the program will be implemented.
3. Focus on the urban growth areas (UGAs).
4. Adopt a two-tiered program with a base program generally affecting UGAs and a targeted investment program for designated centers.
5. Set a statewide CTR goal and enable regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) to establish more aggressive CTR goals in centers.
6. Require RTPOs to create a regional CTR implementation plan.

In August, the Task Force will consider a new definition of "major employer" as well as new recommendations for targeting the program in urban and manufacturing centers, funding mechanisms, and administrative roles.

In September, the Task Force plans to approve a redesign proposal for discussion with the Transportation Secretary, Governor's office, key legislators, and interested parties. The redesign materials discussed at the Task Force meetings can be found at

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/taskforce/tfmaterials.cfm>

## **Results of 2004–05 CTR Performance Grants Program**

Of the 32 projects selected for 2004–05 funding under the state’s Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Performance Grants, 29 projects were completed and reported data in June:

- 14 projects exceeded their goals
- 7 projects made at least 50 percent of their goals
- 8 projects did not meet 50 percent of their goals (of these, 4 showed an increase in single-occupant-vehicle trips)
- The overall program exceeded trip reduction goals by 41 percent

The state paid out \$1,084,217 for reimbursement of start-up costs (up to fifty percent of funds awarded) and for trip reductions achieved. In addition, \$161,508 in bonus money was awarded to the 14 projects that exceeded their goals. Overall, the average price per trip reduced over the year was \$242, compared to the estimated \$460 annual public cost of providing roadway capacity.

One of the top-performing projects came from the Spokane County CTR Office. Spokane area employees received financial incentives and used an online calendar, [mycommute.org](http://mycommute.org), to plan their commutes. The goal of the project was to reduce vehicle trips and miles driven while capturing accurate data. The project reduced 985 vehicle trips per day, almost four times the 254 trips per day estimated in the project design.

Another top-performing project came from the city of Redmond. This project was expected to reduce 300 trips per day and actually reduced 1,032 trips each day. The city of Redmond partnered with King County Metro and the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association to reward participating employers \$300 for each vehicle trip reduced to their Redmond worksites.

For more information, contact Robin Hartsell at (360) 705-7508 or [hartser@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:hartser@wsdot.wa.gov)

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## **Announcement from WSDOT’s Highways and Local Programs Division**

### **WSDOT Grants Available for Local Transportation Projects**

Communities across the state have an opportunity to enhance their transportation systems and improve safety through grant programs offered by WSDOT. WSDOT administers both federal and state grant funding to qualified communities and organizations:

#### **Federal Transportation Enhancement Program**

This federal program has \$42 million available to public agencies and non-profit organizations in Washington for innovative transportation-related projects that contribute to a community’s transportation needs and goals. Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) will prioritize projects within their respective areas following the Enhancement Advisory Committee guidelines. The Enhancement Advisory Committee will submit their recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation for final selections. Eligible projects may include:

- Restoring historic transportation facilities
- Building bike and pedestrian trails and walkways
- Landscaping and scenic beautification
- Treating stormwater runoff and reducing pollution from roadways

#### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Grant and Safe Routes to Schools Program**

Two state grant programs offer a total of \$5 million to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in Washington. The 2005 Washington State Legislature created the Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety grant program and continued the Safe Routes to Schools Program. Applications are due to WSDOT by October 3, 2005. Recommendations will be provided to the state legislature by December 15, 2005.

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Grants** are available to all public agencies for projects that make pedestrian and bicycle improvements at accident locations, intersections, and **transit facilities**; construct paths; and improves safety for children, elderly, and people with disabilities.
- **Safe Routes to School Grants** are available to schools and school districts for projects that improve safety for children and encourage healthy lifestyles through walking or biking. Projects may include sidewalks, pathways, and other street safety measures; education programs; enforcement; and community health initiatives.

For more information on these grants, visit [www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/HomePage/HLPHP.html](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/HomePage/HLPHP.html)

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### Upcoming Events

#### Public Transportation Open House in Clallam County

Tuesday, August 2

11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Sequim Transit Center

North 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and West Cedar Street, Sequim

For more information, contact Dan Wayne at [wayned@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wayned@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7909.

#### Public Transportation Open House in Jefferson County

Tuesday, August 2

4:30–6:00 p.m.

Jefferson County Library

620 Cedar Avenue, Port Hadlock

For more information, contact Dan Wayne at [wayned@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wayned@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7909.

#### Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

August 5, October 7, December 2

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

To confirm times and locations, visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

#### OTM Advisory Committee Meetings

August 5, August 19, September 2, October 14, November 4, November 18, November 30

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Suite 300, Seattle, Washington

For more information, contact Theresa Smith at [smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov) or (206) 464-1282.

#### OTM Grant Technical Work Group Meetings

August 9, August 16, September 2, October 11, November 8, November 15

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Suite 300, Seattle, Washington

For more information, contact Theresa Smith at [smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov) or (206) 464-1282.

#### Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) Conference

Friday, August 12–Sunday, August 14, 2005

Seattle, Washington

For more information, visit: [www.travelinstruction.org](http://www.travelinstruction.org)

#### CTR Task Force Meeting

Friday, August 26

11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., followed by subcommittee meetings. To confirm times and locations, contact Shelley Pedro at [pedros@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:pedros@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7846.

**29th Annual Washington State Public Transportation Conference**

Monday, August 22–Wednesday, August 24, 2005

Double Tree Hotel Seattle Airport

SeaTac, Washington

For more information, visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference)

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. To receive your own copy via e-mail or for questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at [buellt@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:buellt@wsdot.wa.gov) or 360-705-7439.